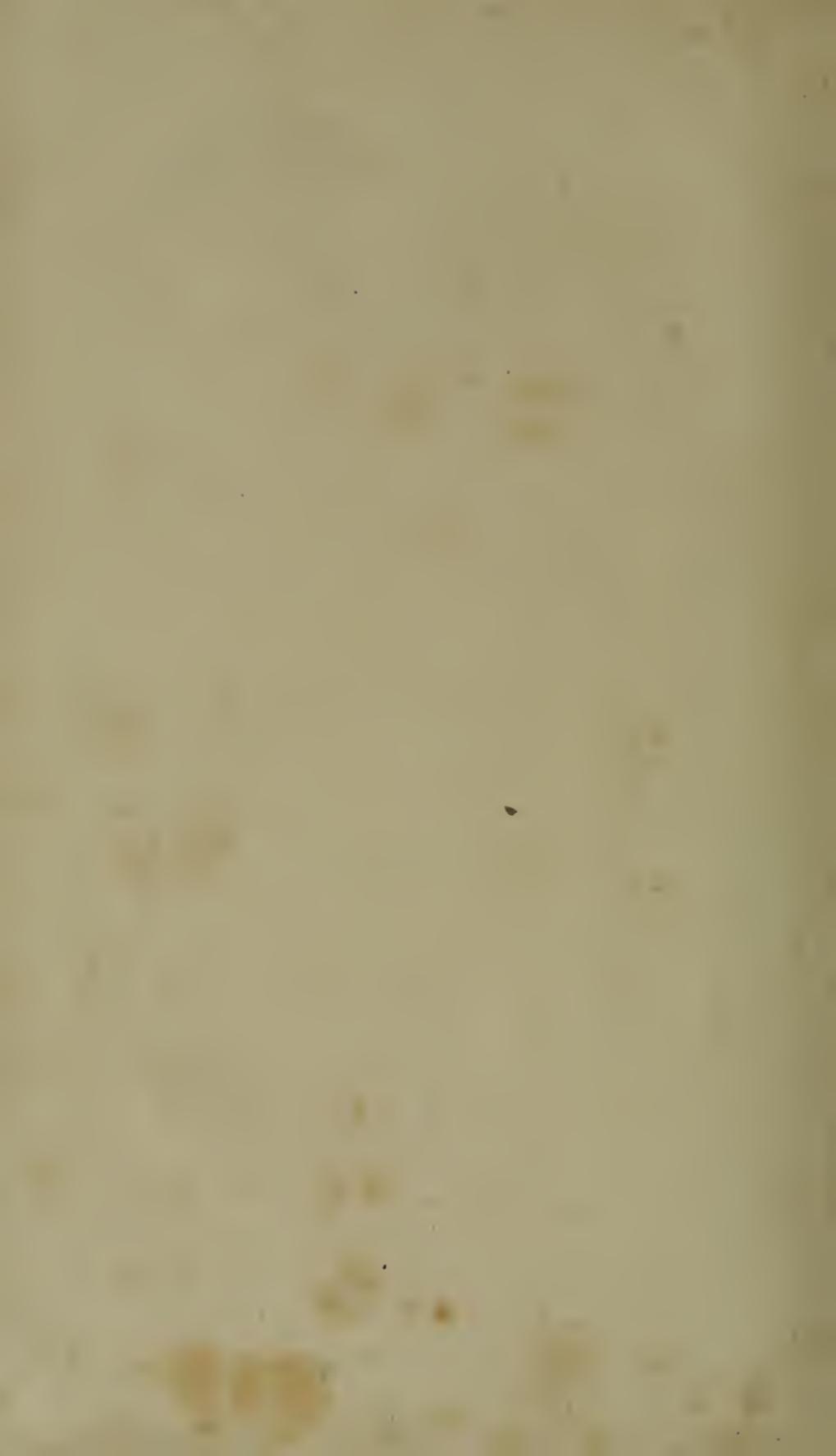


D U K E
U N I V E R S I T Y
L I B R A R Y

Treasure Room



A

BRIEF ACCOUNT
OF THE
LATE REVIVALS OF RELIGION
IN A
NUMBER OF TOWNS
IN THE
New-England States.

EXTRACTED CHIEFLY FROM LETTERS WRITTEN BY SEVERAL GENTLEMEN OF UNQUESTIONABLE VERACITY.

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May, 1799.

A BRIEF ACCOUNT, &c.

EXTRACT I. Mr. S—— W——, of Windham, in Connecticut, thus writes to his friend in Boston.

Windham, Oct. 2, 1798.

Rev. and dear Sir,

YOU will pardon me for using the freedom to trouble you with a line from so unworthy, though sincere friend. It is a time of general health in these parts; but this is not the best news I shall acquaint you with: for "as cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."—God is carrying on a glorious work in several towns in these parts. The work began in Mansfield, first society, about five or six months ago, in a very gradual manner; but soon took a very rapid spread in the west part of the town. A sermon preached in that neighbourhood at a funeral, by the Rev. Mr. Shearman, was greatly blessed. The Spirit of the Lord seemed to sweep all before it like an overflowing flood, though with very little noise or crying out. It is wonderful to see the surprising alteration in that people in so short a time. I conclude there are not less than an hundred souls converted in that town since the work began. Soon after, it began in Hampton, but did not spread with that degree of rapidity as it did in Mansfield. The same happy work has lately taken place in Ashford, in the Rev. Mr. Pond's society, with a good degree of power. It has also spread into the second society in Mansfield, under the pastoral care of Rev. Mr. Welsh; also in the upper part of Canterbury, and lately in Abington society in Pomfret.

Dear Sir, we may say, in the midst of judgment God is showing himself marvellously good and kind; and as it seemed our land, a few months ago, was fully ripe for destruction, and the hot thunderbolts of divine wrath were hanging over our heads, yet God has made a rich display of his grace, in the conversion of so many souls.

One thing is remarkable in this reformation, there is such evidence carried in the work, that none, or but very few dare to oppose it. Bigotry, which was so common between the Standing Order (Congregationalists) and the Dissenters, is done away. This work is chiefly among the Standing Order.

EXTRACT 2. *Containing a further account of the same work, in a letter from the Rev. E—— P—— to his Parents, dated Ashford, September 24, 1798.*

Honored Parents,

I MUST inform you of the work of God, which is going on in these parts. Early in May, an attention began in the first society in Mansfield, which increased to a great degree, so as to become general. It then began in Hampton, and is as general as in Mansfield. About four weeks since, it began here, and, for the time, has spread very fast; so that about eighty have been under great concern: Of this number, nearly twenty have a hope that they have been "born again." The work seems to be spreading. In one family of my people who have only three little daughters, the eldest fifteen years old, they all give evidence that they have been born again! The work has also begun in Mr. Welsh's society in Mansfield; and the prospects are very favourable in Westford. —— Do unite in prayer to God; if only two or three, don't omit it, that God would pour out his Spirit upon you. This seems to have been the beginning of the work in Mansfield.

EXTRACT 3. *Containing an account of the beginning of the reformation in Hartford, in a letter from the Rev. S—— S. N——, of that City, to his friend in Boston, dated January 14, 1799.*

Rev. and dear Sir,

— A GLORIOUS revival of religion has lately taken place among us. Two of my brothers-in-law, the youngest about 12 years old, and the other fourteen, had been under deep conviction at times, for several weeks before our last Thanksgiving; and on that day, whilst I was preaching, the youngest was brought out clear in his mind, and went home with his little soul overflowing with joy. This affected the whole family; several of whom we trust, could rejoice with him; all the rest were much alarmed, and led to cry out under pungent conviction, "What shall we do to be saved?" From this it has spread from house to house, and from heart to heart, till almost the whole City has got alarmed.

I think as many as 15 or 20 have been hopefully converted; many more are under painful convictions, and the work still spreading. It has also extended its happy influence among the other denominations, and they open conferences, and welcome its approach.

We have meetings almost every evening in the week.—Here is surely a Macedonian cry, "Do come over and help us."

EXTRACT 4. *Containing a further account of the same work, in a letter from the Rev. J—— B——, dated at Trumbull, February 6, 1799, to his friend at Newbury-Port.*

My dear friend and brother,

THROUGH the kind hand of God, I arrived here yesterday. I stopped at Hartford, and preached five sermons.

The spirit of hearing at Hartford is greater than any representations which have been made. Young people of both sexes flock by hundreds, and the prospect is flattering in the extreme. Conference meetings are held every night in different private houses. In Mr. Strong's society, 60 are thought to be under conviction, and 20 have been hopefully brought into gospel liberty. In Mr. Nelson's 30, and some in Mr. Flint's.

The youth hold correspondence one with another by letter, and with those of the neighbouring towns. Hundreds are under some serious concern, while hundreds more stand astonished, and are ready to cry, “*What meaneth all this?*”

The Lord seems to have stepped out of the usual path of Ordinances, to effect this work more immediately in the displays of his almighty power and out-pouring of his Spirit; probably to show that the work is his own. It is not attended with noise and confusion, but with solemnity and reverence. No fire—no rushing wind—no earthquake; but a still small voice goes before this wonderful work; no doubt to hide pride from man. The ministers are stirred up to uncommon diligence and labour, so that they have scarcely time to prepare for public exercises.

The sacred flame has spread into many neighbouring towns!* and the pious are flocking into Hartford to be eye-witnesses of this glorious work. I have felt myself so much engaged in preaching, visiting and conversing with old and young, that my attention has been literally taken off from Wife, Children, Flock, and bodily infirmities. O that my past time had been better employed and filled than it has been. Should my health be continued, I hope, by the grace of God, to spend my strength wholly in the Lord's Cause,—which carries its own reward with it.

Two hundred miles N. W. of Hartford, on the border of the Indian nations, I am informed that the Lord is pouring out his Spirit plentifully. The Aborigines flock to hear the gospel, and fall under the word like Dagon before the Ark. I have seen a preacher from those parts, who gives the most flattering accounts, and informs, that very large numbers have been added to the churches in that vicinity the last year.

After sermon was finished upon a late occasion in the woods, an Indian stood up with tears in his eyes, and thus addressed the au-

* It is mentioned in a letter from a respectable character in Hartford, of April 25, that it has spread into nearly 100 towns.

dience ; " I desire to bless God, that white people ever came into this country. White people brought the Bible, and the religion of Jesus with them. White people prayed for the conversion of the heathen, and I stand up this day as a living witness of the power of God's converting grace *in answer to their prayers.* Continue to pray for the conversion of more heathens, that they also may be brought to the knowledge of Jesus."

EXTRACT 5. *Rev. C—— B——, of Shaftbury, in Vermont, gives the following particulars of the reformation in that town.*

Rev. Sir,

Feb. 21, 1799.

I AM sensible that under too great a degree of animation, even Christians too often exaggerate their accounts of revivals of religion. But I will attempt a simple, but short narrative of the late wonderful work of God in this place.

In the month of April last, there appeared nothing among this people but the most rapid increase of every species of vice and immorality ; and even professors had grown cold as to religious exercises.

Towards the last of that month, it pleased God to visit my poor soul with some sense of my own vileness and short coming, and how little I had done for God and the good of souls. At this time I think I had a glimpse of the infinite character of Jehovah, which made me shrink into nothing in my own esteem ; then, to my astonishment, my soul was strangely drawn forth, at particular times, in secret prayer, for the salvation of sinners. Repeated exercises of this kind gave me a strong confidence, that the Lord would soon work salvation in this place. There were, however, no favourable symptoms among the people until the month of July : then a young woman, who had been converted some years before, was stirred up, and came forward in baptism. Her conversation was made the mean of the awakening of a number of young people. Thus the work began. In August, four persons more were baptized. In September, I baptized seventeen. Many were awakened by the solemnity of this ordinance. (Indeed I think there was no one mean more blessed for the conviction of sinners, through the whole course of this work, than the administration of baptism.) But to return ; we as yet held our church conferences, to hear the relations of candidates, but once a month. At the close of October, we were obliged to attend two days, and then were not able to hear all that wished to relate. The next Lord's-day was a severe storm ; baptism was omitted : the church attended two days of that week also, to hear the young converts declare what the Lord had done for them. I was then under necessity to call for assistance in administering baptism. Accordingly, brother Samuel Rogers attended the next Sabbath, and we baptized 46 that day. We then found it necessary to hold our Church confer-

ences to hear relations once a week. The next Sabbath I baptized 21; the next 16; the next 13; and the next 9; and there have been but a few weeks since, that I have not been called to the precious work of baptizing. Zion's gates were truly then thronged with converts!

The whole number added to this church, since last May, is 175; 25 by letter and other ways; and 150 by baptism. Our whole number is 346. Many of this number are removed into different parts of the country; there are, however, nearly 300 that live in this vicinity, the remotest of them not more than six miles from our meeting house.

There have also been 70 added to the West church in this town since the work began; and 13 to the East church.

As to the principal means by which this work has been carried on, I must say, that no one's little or great preaching can justly lay any claim to the honors of it. Several brethren in the ministry have visited us in the time, and all of them were blessed in their labours. A brother Jones, from England, was an instrument for the awakening of several.

I have been filled with wonder and astonishment, to see how the Lord has seemed to preserve some of almost all the preaching that has been in this town since I have been here. Even when I had mourned and thought I had laboured in vain, and that my preaching was as water spilt upon a rock; the Lord has now made known that he designed it for the good of souls. O my brother, let us never be discouraged; we cannot always tell when our labours are blessed. I cannot say how many, but the Lord has made my poor weak efforts the means of awakening a considerable number. But the greatest part of the people have been awakened by attending the solemnity of baptism, and by conversation one with another.—Indeed, the most that I can say is, It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

There has not in years past been the most cordial fellowship between the three churches in this town; but the Lord has now effected a happy union between us. On the last Lord's-day in January, we all met at one communion table. That happy day my soul had desired for years. Nothing but experience could have made me believe it possible, that I could have felt so much solid delight, anticipated so much trouble, and rejoiced with so much trembling, at one and the same time. That day, I trust, will never be forgotten by me.

The north part of Bennington, which lies south of us, has shared considerably in this grace, and have joined with the churches in this town, and some few members from the town north of us; but the greatest part that have been wrought upon are within this town, which is six miles square.

In about two months after the work began, the whole town seemed to be affected. Conference meetings were attended two or three times in a week in almost every neighbourhood; and it was surprising to me, that scarcely a single instance appeared of any over-heated zeal, or slight of passion! Both sinners under

conviction, and those newly brought into the liberty of the gospel, conversed in their meetings with the greatest freedom ; they spake one at a time a few words, in the most solemn manner I ever heard people in my life. And in general they spake so low, that their assemblies must be perfectly still, or they could not hear them : Yet a remarkable power attended their conversation. Sinners would tremble as though they felt themselves in the immediate presence of the great Jehovah.

Some of all ranks and characters among us have been taken ; from the most respectable members of society, to the vilest in the place. Some of our most noted Deists have bowed the knee to King Jesus. And a number of Universalists have forsaken their delusions, and embraced the truth.

In the revival four years ago last summer, we then received ten children into the church, aged from nine to thirteen years, with a number of other young people ; all of them remain in good standing with us, and are now able to help others ; excepting one, who, I trust, is gone to the church triumphant. In this revival, we have received sixteen whose age is from nine to fifteen years. From nine, I have baptized some of almost every age to upwards of seventy !

We have now upwards of one hundred unmarried persons in this church. There are also a large number of youths who have joined the other churches in this town. O my God ! keep them in the love of the truth ! My very soul trembles when I think of them. There is not a sufficient number of young people now left in the town (who can unite) to carry on their merry meetings. Every company of them is broken up.

I lately enjoyed the happiness of having upwards of seventy youths and children, that were professors, to visit and hold a conference at my house in one evening. You may guess, but it would be difficult to tell, with what a mixture of joy and trembling I was then filled.

The severest cold, snow and ice we have had this tedious winter, I have not heard once mentioned as any terror to the most delicate ladies, young or old, we have in the place ; but they have cheerfully followed their Divine Redeemer into the liquid grave, without the least intimidation.

As to myself, I think if ever I knew what it was to have extraordinary strength, it has been within a few months past. My lungs, which I had thought were on the decay, now seemed to renew their youth. Preaching three and four times a week, besides attending other meetings almost every day for months together, seemed very little if any to exhaust my strength. I think of all men in the world, I have the greatest cause to be humble before God, for his abundant goodness bestowed upon a most unworthy wretch.

When I think of my own weakness and insufficiency, and the great number of young, inexperienced Christians committed to my charge, my heart shrinks within me ; and I am ready to wish they had a more able and pious watchman to go before them.

But all the hope I have is, that He who leadeth Joseph like a flock will gather the lambs in his arms, and gently lead his flock into the flowery fields of gospel truth, and beside the still waters of eternal life.

I sometimes anticipate so much trouble, that it quite absorbs my spirits, and drowns my joy. Then I think it best to rejoice while I can, and let to-morrow take thought for itself.

It is, however, a very interesting crisis with us; if we are faithful, and make a right improvement of the great mercies bestowed upon us, we may continue to be a happy people; if not, a series of trouble and sorrow await us. Dear brother, pray for us, that we may be kept in the love of the truth; that the God of love and peace may ever dwell with us.

I must not indulge my feelings, I shall intrude upon your patience.

EXTRACT 6. *A gentleman in Pembroke thus writes to his friend in Boston.*

Dear Sir,

Pembroke, April 2, 1799.

GOD has been pleased to begin a glorious work in the first parish in Marshfield, and a few scattering drops in towns adjoining, although but a few as yet. O may we all be enabled to wrestle like Jacob and prevail like Israel. We need the prayers of all that have an interest at the throne of grace, that we may be kept from error and delusion. O may the time soon come, when the knowledge of God shall cover the earth, as the waters do the seas.

As to the present state of the reformation among us, there are between 30 and 40, in a judgment of charity, brought to the knowledge of the truth; and more than that number appear to be under serious impressions of mind.

INFORMATION, though not very correct, has also been received from a number of towns in Cheshire County, in New-Hampshire, of a very pleasing and extensive reformation there.

The following towns are said to have shared largely in it, viz. Unity, Marlow, Lemster, Alstead, Ackworth, Cornish, and Plainfield, with some others in that neighbourhood. Several towns in the district of Maine, are favoured at this time with like revivals; but for the want of accurate documents, a particular account cannot be given.

If the repentance of a single sinner causes joy in heaven among the angels of God, what shouts of immortal praise must have echoed through all the realms of bliss, upon the accession of such numbers to the Redeemer's kingdom!

O Lord, may thy kingdom come, and thy will be done, on earth as in heaven; for Christ's sake. Amen.

